

NIH...Turning Discovery Into Health

Progress in Heart, Lung, and Blood Research



Breathing Better with COPD

COPD

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD, is a serious but preventable lung disease that makes it hard to breathe. COPD has had many different names throughout history, including “voluminous lungs” in the 17th century and “emphysema” more recently. Today, we know that people with COPD have not only emphysema but also chronic obstructive bronchitis. Chronic obstructive bronchitis and emphysema damage the lungs in different ways, but both make it hard for people with COPD to breathe.

Doctors diagnose COPD using a simple test called spirometry to measure how well the lungs are working. More than 12 million Americans are currently diagnosed with COPD, and researchers estimate that 12 million more have it but don't know it. Symptoms include chronic shortness of breath, cough, or mucus production. Research has told us that the main cause of COPD is smoking, but some people inherit risk, and infections and air pollution can make symptoms worse.

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute-supported research has told us that certain treatments and lifestyle changes — such as quitting smoking — can help people with COPD stay more active and slow the progression of their disease. Although COPD is a chronic condition, being informed and getting treated early can markedly improve a person's quality of life.

In addition, because of paid marketing ads and effective educational campaigns—such as the NHLBI's national campaign *COPD Learn More Breathe Better*®—more

Americans than ever know that COPD is the fourth leading cause of death in the U.S., and that it is largely preventable. Today, 68 percent of adults are aware of COPD, up from 49 percent in 2004.

Imagine the Future...

Therapies repair damaged lung tissue, restoring a person's ability to breathe normally.

Effective quit-smoking programs prevent millions of COPD deaths in America and throughout the developing world.

The NIH's National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute provides global leadership for research, training, and education programs to promote the prevention and treatment of heart, lung, and blood diseases and enhance the health of all individuals so that they can live longer and more fulfilling lives.



National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute



National Institutes of Health



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